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Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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PASS AGRICULTURE, FAS:FCA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET-INDIAN AGRICULTURAL TRADE

1. ON JANUARY 9 AG.ATTACHE DISCUSSED CURRENT SOVIET-INDIAN TRADE WITH COMMERCIAL COUNSELLOR B.M. OZA. FOCUS OF DISCUSSION WAS ON AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND, IN PARTICULAR, GRAIN AND SUGAR TRADE.

2. THE AVERAGE ANNUAL VOLUME OF INDIAN EXPORTS TO THE SOVIET UNION FO 1975 AMOUNTS TO APPROXIMATELY 400 MILLION DOLLARS., 300 MILLION OF WHICH ARE CLASSIFIED AS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. MAJOR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS IN 1975 INCLUDED TEA (50,000 M.T.), COFFEE (20,000 M.T.), PEPPER (10,000 M.T.), TOBACCO (20,000 M.T.), PEANUTS (20,000 M.T.) AND OILCAKES FROM PEANUTS (100,000 M.T.). THE LATTER THREE PRODUCTS COMPETE WITH U.S. AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND SHOULD BE NOTED.

SINGIFICANTLY, THE SOVIETS HAVE ALSO INDICATED A FIRM INTEREST TO PURCHASE GREATER QUANTITIES OF PEANUT MEAL, WHICH SUGGESTS A GROWING TRADE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOYBEAN MEAL.

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3. AGRICULTURAL IMPORTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION REMAN SMALL IN

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VOLUME -- THE MAIN IMPORT IS SUNFLOWER OIL. THERE HAS BEEN SOME EFFORT TO PROMOTE COTTON, BUT THE INDIAN TRADE IS NOT INTERESTED IN THE SHORT STABLE FIBER OFFERED.

4. AGATTACHE QUESTIONED WHETHER SOVIETS WERE PRESSING INDIAN GOVERNMENT FOR REPAYMENT OF WHEAT LOAN MADE SEVERAL YEARS AGO. RESPONSE WAS THAT SOVIETS HAD SUPPLIED INDIA WITH TWO MILLION TONS OF GRAIN AND THAT THE SHIPHENT WAS COMPLETED BY JUNE 1974. CONSIDERATION HAD BEEN MADE TO REPAY THE LOAN IN KIND BEGINNING OCTOBER 1976 IN FIVE EQUAL ANNUAL INSTALLMENTS OF 400,000 TONS. NEGOTIATIONS, HOWEVER, ARE CONTINUING, AND THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH REPAYMENT WILL BE MADE WITH CONSUMER GOODS RATHER THAN GRAIN, A POSITION THE INDIAN COUNSELLOR CONSIDERED AS A GOOD GESTURE, CONSIDERING THE CURRENT USSR GRAIN SHORTFALL.

5. IN VIEW OF THE REPORTED LOW SUGARBEET HARVEST IN THE USSR, AGATTACHE ASKED IF INDIA PLANS TO EXPORT SUGAR TO USSR DURING 1975/76. WE WERE ADVISED THAT NO SUGAR HAS BEEN EXPORTED AND NONE WAS CONTEMPLATED. COUNSELLOR ADDED THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT MOST OF THE SUGAR IMPORTED BY THE USSR CAME FROM CUBA.

6. ATTACHE BELIEVES SUGAR IMPORTS BY USSR MAY BECOME STRONG ITEM IN COMING MONTHS. PRESS COVERAGE ON UKRAINIAN PLAN RESULTS SHOW THAT UKRAINIAN SUGARBEET PRODUCTION WILL ONLY REACH 40 MILLION TONS, WHICH IS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN EARLIER ESTIMATES. ASSUMING CONDITIONS IN OTHER MAJOR SUGARBEET AREAS SIMILAR TO THOSE IN UKRAINE, WE WOULD ESTIMATE 1975 SUGARBEET PRODUCTION AT 65 MILLION TONS -- 13 MILLION BELOW THE LESS THAN AVERAGE 1974 HARVEST AND WELL BELOW THE 94 MILLION TONS CALLED FOR IN THE 1975 PLAN.

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